



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

been uniformly neglected, and we are now not only involved in hostilities with France and her dependencies, but also with the United States of America.

Your petitioners moreover beg leave to remind your Honourable House, That during the continuance of these hostilities a great portion of the manufacturing part of the community have been repeatedly reduced to the extremity of want; that the national debt has increased to the enormous amount of *eight hundred millions*, and that taxation bears so heavily upon the middling classes of society, that his Majesty's Chancellor of the Exchequer is said to have declared, that the present system of finance can be carried no further.

Your petitioners therefore, humbly conceive, that the disappointments the nation has hitherto experienced in the course of the war in which we have so long been engaged, must be imputed as matter of blame either to the individuals employed to execute the measures of government, or to ministers, who by the unskilfulness of their plans have lost attainable objects, or by their folly have wasted the efforts of the nation on objects which are unattainable: and yet your petitioners beg leave to represent to your Honourable House, that it has so happened that not only the general policy and conduct of the war, but every ill-concerted expedition which has occurred in the course of its progress, and which has been from time to time called in question, stands vindicated upon the journals of your Honourable House, by the votes of majorities of its members.

Your petitioners then, after the most serious consideration, cannot but regard as the main and primary causes of these evils, the imperfect state of the representation of the people in your Honourable House, and especially the inroads which have been made upon the representative system by the lapse of time, in consequence of which the nominations of the members of decayed boroughs is fallen into the disposal of individuals who systematically make such nomination subservient to the purposes of corruption, and frequently a direct matter of bargain and sale; and to these causes your petitioners cannot but ascribe the fact, that in so many instances placemen and pensioners of the crown who have purchased seats, or who have otherwise corruptly procured from individuals nominations entitling

them to sit as members of your Honourable House, have been empowered to decide upon their own misdeeds, or upon the misdeeds of those upon whose continuance in office they depended for their subsistence; a practice, the obvious tendency of which is to render the responsibility of ministers (the grand security of our national liberty and prosperity) an empty name.

Your petitioners humbly conceiving that the above-mentioned evils are greatly aggravated by what they must ever consider as the unconstitutional protracting of the duration of Parliament from three years to seven, pray your Honourable House well to consider the premises, and, by taking immediate measures for the extending of the elective franchise, by the exclusion from your Honourable House of placemen and pensioners of the crown, and by the shortening the duration of Parliament, to apply a remedy to evils which are daily increasing in magnitude, and which threaten to undermine the foundation of our glorious constitution.

(Signed by about 7000 persons.)

GENERAL SYNOD OF ULSTER.

At an Annual Meeting of the Ministers and Elders of the General Synod of Ulster, held in Cookstown, July 3, 1813, the following declaration was agreed to, and ordered to be published:—

That, however reluctant we may be to obtrude our political sentiments on the attention of the public, we feel ourselves called on, at this time, explicitly to avow our unshaken attachment to the principles of the British constitution, an attachment inculcated by our fathers, and confirmed by our own observation and experience.

Sensible of the blessings of that civil and religious liberty which we enjoy, we cannot be uninterested spectators of the exertions which are made to extend them to all our fellow-subjects. Actuated by the spirit of the gospel, which teaches us to promote "peace on earth and goodwill towards men," and earnestly desirous that this benevolent spirit should be cherished by the people under our care, we consider it our duty to declare, that from the abolition of political distinctions, on account of religious profession, so far as may be consistent with the principles of the constitution, we anticipate the happiest consequences. Hence, we conceive, would arise a union of interest, the firmest

bond of society, and a sense of gratitude, the sure ground of fidelity and attachment; while the baneful operation of party spirit would be restrained, and the pretext removed, which selfish and designing men employ, to agitate and pervert the public mind. Signed in our name, and by our order,

JAMES MORELL, *Moderator.*

SYNOD OF ULSTER.

Account of the Proceedings, in a letter to a friend.

July 16th, 1813.

MY DEAR SIR,

AGREEABLY to your request, I will endeavour to give you a summary of the most important proceedings of last Synod. Your own recollection will serve to correct any misstatements which I may possibly make.

The proceedings in general, though perhaps not in any part exactly what we could have desired, still afford considerable cause of rejoicing to the true friends of Presbyterian principles. The independence of the Synod has, (I believe for the first time these fifteen years,) been rescued from the gripe of the FEW, whose political sentiments in 1798-9, awed the timid and agitated MANY; with the aid of hints, and shrugs, and mysterious declarations, into an acquiescence in measures which their hearts abhorred! I know that many of the acquiescers would bluster mightily at such an insinuation against their spirit; but we all know the weakness of human nature; we all know the fact! and even these self-defenders, must feel a self-consciousness which ought to make them silent, lest they incur the disgraceful imputation of persisting in error, in despite of conviction. There seems, however, to be a destructive and unconquerable pride in man, which revolts at the idea, and will not perceive the magnanimity, of acknowledging a fault. And to this source, principally, we may trace the continued servitude of the Synod; and that ungenerous conduct of adding insult to injury, which is discoverable in some parts of their minutes, from 1798 to 1812.

Many of the once timid, however, at the last meeting, nobly avowed their fears and errors, and came forward like men and Christians, anxious, as far as possible, to

do away their unhappy effects. What must be peculiarly gratifying to the anticipators of happier days for the Presbyterian Church, is, that the combatants in the cause of independence, were chiefly the junior members of the Body, ably supported by respectable elders, who, doubtless, in many cases thwarted the aims of their ministers, by thinking and speaking for themselves. This, I say, is a pleasing circumstance: but, alas! when we look into the world, and behold how many that commenced their careers in the paths of honour and independence, are about to conclude them in those of disgrace and servility, the glowing enthusiasm of hope is chilled by the damps of despair. Still the heart of the patriot and philanthropist enjoys one consolation in the midst of many sorrows, that there are yet some men, in whose souls the generous sentiments of youth, are cherished by the judgment of age; and who having run, like the sun in the firmament, a race of glory, ("quæ est tam gloriosa ut virtus,") dispensing light and heat to the cold mass of public opinion and feeling, shall go down to the grave in peace, under the joyful assurance, that they have exerted their energies to fertilize the mind of their country. That the glow of virtuous independence, which animated the breasts of the majority of the Synod at our late meeting, may thus burst into a bright, a permanent, and an useful flame; and that an enlightened, liberal laity, may check in the clergy every tendency to the assumption of undue privilege, or a departure from the paths of Christian charity, is my frequent, fervent prayer to Heaven!

I scarcely know how I have been carried so far from the purpose of my letter. The best apology I can make, is to return to it.

The circumstances relative to Dr. Dickson having brought the character of the Synod before the tribunal of the public, and thus materially involving the interests of the Presbyterian body, naturally occupied the principal part of our time and attention. At our meeting in 1812, Dr. Black called the attention of the Synod to Dr. Dickson's Narrative, denominating that part of it which related to the Synod, "a mass of misstatement and misrepresentation." Out of this "abominable mass," he selected "six points," and by the zealous aid of Mr. Thompson, of Carnmoanav, was assisted to a *seventh*; on each of which

he made severe animadversions, and on the whole, succeeded in exciting a pretty general abhorrence both of Dr. Dickson and his publication. This general feeling led to the condemnation of Dr. Dickson's book; to a motion for cutting himself off from the body; to thanks to Dr. Black "for his zeal and abilities," and to a request, that he would publish his *Speeches in our vindication*. In vain it was represented, that the world would look upon our decision with suspicion, *we, ourselves, being accusers, witnesses, judges, and jury!* that our determination was rash and inconsiderate, *ninety-ninths* of the ministers having *never read* the book, and of course, yielding their own understandings to Dr. Black's assertion; and that it was an unprecedented thing to *thank a man for a Speech*. The spring-tide of *pious indignation* had set in, and impelled by the storm of Dr. Black's eloquence, easily surmounted a few opposing banks, and overwhelmed the hapless Dickson, and his "mass of falsehoods." This statement disproves the assertion in the minute of 1812, that Dr. Black was "*unanimously* thanked, and requested to publish." There was a very sensible and respectable opposition, who finding that they were unable to stem the downward torrent of party rage, and ignorant zeal, sat in gloomy silence, convinced that time would hush the storm, and still the agitated waves. As a *signal mark of clemency*, Dr. Dickson was not cut off from the body, however, on the *single* evidence of Dr. Black, but graciously allowed a whole year to draw up an *apology satisfactory to the Synod*. "That is, (one of your sneering Magazine writers would say,) he was kindly permitted to perform an impossibility."

In this state stood affairs at the close of our session in 1812. Subsequently, Dr. Black published his *Statement*, and Dr. Dickson his *Refractations*; and at our last meeting, the Synod came with tranquillized passions, and better informed minds, to review its own conduct, and that of the two Doctors.

The business of Review was opened by a junior member, Mr. WILLIAM PORTER, of Newtownlimavady, in a speech which will not be soon forgotten; and a speech replete with manly, liberal, candid sentiments, and delivered in a style of eloquence, which would command the attention even of the British senate. He fairly balanced the rights of individuals, and bodies of men. He took a masterly

view of the situation and character of the Synod. He pointed out the dilemmas into which individuals and societies are frequently drawn, by attending to the suggestions of prejudice and passion, rather than those of candour and reason. He gave a striking picture of the unhappy effects of clerical rancour and division; showing, that for the sake of religion, the ministers of the gospel should not only be *free from crimes*, but, if possible, *unsuspected of criminality*. He pointed out the jealous eye with which the public would view the proceedings of judges in *their own cause*; and the still more distrustful eye with which those judges ought to view their *own* conduct, lest their judgment should be biassed by selfishness or pride. He declared his conviction, that the last Synod had been hurled from the seat of honour, by the whirlwind of passion; that they had lost much, as a body, in the estimation of the Presbyterian people; that he, as an individual, felt both shame and regret, for having, in some degree, acquiesced in the proceedings of the last year, relative to Dr. Dickson, and that, in order to redeem his own character, and that of his brethren, he would enter upon a review of Synodical measures, regarding Dr. Dickson, from the year 1798-9, endeavouring to make censure light wherever it was merited, upon the Synod, Dr. Dickson, or Dr. Black. He expressed his intention of taking Dr. Black's Statement as a text-book, on which he intended to ground a series of motions.

This proposition met with warm opposition from many members, who had held fore-ground situations in the transactions of the preceding meeting. I am not at liberty to judge what the *motives* were which induced those zealous gentlemen to desire that the business might be quashed, but their *reasons* were certainly very flimsy. However, when the business had been retarded for nearly 20 hours, by various shifts and manœuvres, it was decided by a vote of the house, that Mr. Porter should be permitted to proceed with his motions.

I do not recollect the *precise words* of those motions, and several proposed amendments; but you may rely upon my accuracy as to their *substance and bearing*.

Substance of First Motion.—That the Synod of 1799 acted *inconsiderately*, in asserting that two of its members, (Dr. Dickson and Mr. Smith,) then in confinement, were "*implicated in treasonable or seditious prac-*

tices"—these words being liable to an unfavourable construction, respecting those two gentlemen. The former part of this sentence contains the original motion, and the latter an amendment to it, which were carried by a considerable majority, after a long discussion, and an *aged* opposition. The decision of this question condemns the first of Dr. Black's charges of *calumny*, against Dr. Dickson.

Substance of Second Motion.—That the Synod of 1805 acted *improperly*, in dismissing, without consideration, a memorial from Dr. Dickson, inquiring, "whether *he* was alluded to, in the minute of 1799, as one of those persons implicated in treasonable or seditious practices." You, and I, and other *plain people*, supposed, that the cold, insulting, unmanly, (some have said unchristian-like,) conduct of the Synod of 1805, would have excited a burst of indignation from all who *were not* members of it, and an expression of unfeigned contrition from those who *were*; but what was our astonishment, when the motion was carried, only by a very small majority! The decision of this question proves, that Dr. Dickson, in expressing his indignation at the conduct of the Synod of that year, was not *altogether a vile slanderer*.

Substance of Third Motion.—That the Synod of 1799 acted *wrong*, in suspending the payment of Dr. Dickson's bounty, whilst he was in confinement. This motion was withdrawn, in consequence of an explanation from Dr. Black to this effect, "That he (Dr. Black) was in Dublin a short time before the meeting of Synod of that year, and had a conversation with the Secretary of State, (Lord Castlereagh, I believe,) who said that the Irish government was very much surprized to find, that the Synod of Ulster issued *Regium Donum* to men in confinement on suspicion of disloyalty; and that his having communicated this to the meeting, was the cause of the suspension of *Regium Donum* from Dr. Dickson and Mr. Smith."

It was argued, that no *verbal* communication from any one member of government, to any one member of Synod, could with propriety be made the ground of a public, official act, as there might be a possibility of both the influencing individuals being actuated by motives of personal hostility; which *was* probably the fact in Dr. Dickson's case. It was also argued, that Dr. Black should have stated this circumstance in his "Substance," and not have permitted the world to receive an inju-

rious impression respecting the conduct of the Synod, where he knew it was directed by the civil authorities. Under all the circumstances of the case, however, it was generally thought, that considering the *delicate situation* in which the Synod of 1799 stood, if it had done wrong, it had done so from a pardonable timidity. But though the motion was not pressed, it was not thought that Dr. Dickson, being ignorant of the facts above stated, had been (as Dr. Black insinuates in his Speeches,) guilty of calumny or slander, in publishing to the world, that the Synod had acted towards him with severity.

Substance of Fourth Motion.—That Dr. Dickson has not substantiated his charge against the Synod, of having improperly excluded the congregation of Keady, from the list of those, whose ministers have been entitled to bounty. There were two attempts made to modify this motion, but I believe it passed pretty nearly in its original form. Some members however, contended that Keady had been overlooked, and its memorials treated with coldness; and I am convinced that there was a general feeling, that Dr. Dickson's complaints respecting it, were not *altogether unfounded*; nor so unjust as to bring upon him the censure of wilful misstatement.

Substance of Fifth Motion.—That Dr. Dickson's charge against the Synod, of a motion being made in 1799, to cut him off from the body, when he was a prisoner in Fort-George, is *unfounded*. This was carried without opposition; but still it was urged in palliation, that Dr. Dickson had received incorrect information, from persons who confounded and misunderstood the proceedings of Synod; and besides, that he does not assert it as a fact, but only as a *doubtful matter*. No man would attempt to justify Dr. Dickson in this point; yet I do not believe, that there is one member of the Synod, except Dr. Black and perhaps one senior and one "junior member of great respectability," who would say that he has issued to the world "a made up slander," when he declares that he relied on received information.

Substance of Sixth Motion.—That Dr. Dickson is *incorrect* in stating that a motion was at any time made, for the purpose of excluding him from being a contributor to the Widows' Fund, and his wife and family from the benefits thereof. This was also carried after a slight opposition; but it was admitted that there was a discussion on the subject in the year 1800 or

1801, which might readily lead Dr. Dickson into an error, (he not being present,) and which must, in the eyes of every unprejudiced man, rescue him from the charge of "studied misrepresentation."

These three motions (4th, 5th, 6th) were handed to Dr. Dickson for his consideration until next Sederunt, and Mr. Porter proceeded.

Substance of Seventh Motion.—That a charge preferred against Dr. Dickson by Mr. Thompson and Dr. Black, of having "grossly violated truth and decency" in his statement relative to Mrs. Porter, has not been substantiated. This motion excited a considerable ferment, and drew forth many bold assertions. Dr. Dickson's statement is, that a motion was made and discussed in the year 1798, and followed up and lost in 1799, for erasing the name of Mrs. Porter from the list of annuitants on the Widows' Fund. Mr. Thompson and Dr. Black, both, forcibly and repeatedly denied, that any motion was made, or any discussion entered into, on the subject in 1798, but admitted that some conversation had taken place in 1799. Here a most unpleasant scene ensued. Several members of known worth and integrity, rose, and proved, beyond contradiction, that there had been, not only a discussion, but a warm and tedious discussion in 1798, and also in the following year. One gentleman said that he had himself taken a considerable share in that of 1798. At this time I believe every one thought that the matter would be put to rest in a few moments. But, no. The two gentlemen, beaten from the outwork of discussion, fled to the citadel of motion, specific motion; and there after hurling down several missile weapons, Dr. Black, as a routing blow, read part of a letter from an absent member, which stated, "that the sentiments of the contributors had been so fully ascertained by the discussion that it was thought unnecessary to put the question." But this was a most unfortunate effort, the letter dart flew innoxious over his assailants; was seized by a youth of some activity, and being hurled at the Doctor, laid him prostrate; for the very circumstance of there being a question to be put, proved incontrovertibly that there had been a motion, or something equivalent to a motion, before the house! Here again it was thought that the business would be issued; but it once more took an unexpected turn. Compassion for the fallen great, took possession of the hearts of the majority

of the Synod. The previous question was moved; discussion interrupted, and substantial justice sacrificed to the feelings of individuals. Against this procedure, 22 Ministers and 10 Elders entered their protest.

Mr. Porter then came to his grand motion, the disavowal of Dr. Black's publication, as not containing the sentiments of the Synod. Here he adverted to four errors acknowledged by Dr. Black; to those points which the Synod had condemned by its own vote; to Dr. Black's foul insinuation, (it has been said *impudently*,) uttered under the mask of gratitude to Heaven; (*Substance, &c. p. 49.*) to his presumptuous appeal to the Catholics; and to the whole tenor and spirit of his production, as breathing a something inconsistent with the mild, gentle, and forgiving dictates of the gospel. He then made a motion to the following effect:

That this Synod does not consider itself responsible for the contents of a pamphlet entitled, "Substance, &c." published by the Rev. Dr. Black, since its last meeting. This motion was followed up and supported by many excellent strictures on the Publication, which contains a Preface, Appendices, and many other exceptionable parts, not anticipated in the foolish request of the Synod of 1812.

It would be hard, and perhaps uncharitable to say, that Dr. Black finding the motion would be easily carried, and seeing that he must fall, wisely endeavoured to break the fall. I shall therefore say, that he rose and said in a most handsome manner, "Moderator, I am perfectly at ease, as to what may be said of my publication, or of myself. I am sound here, (laying his hand in a very impressive manner upon his heart,) and can bear a little censure, though rather unused to it from this body. And to save the precious time of this Synod for much more important concerns than any that relate to me, I close with the motion before you, and here freely take upon myself, the sole responsibility for the contents of the work alluded to."

Here then Dr. Black's case closed, and Dr. Dickson was called on (having had one night for consideration,) to express his sentiments respecting the decision on the questions put into his hands. He rose, and read in part from a M.S. what he termed his Apology. In one point, namely, that of a motion being made to expel him from the Synod, he acknowledged himself to have been led astray, and expressed his heartfelt regret for having

published, even from misinformation, what was incorrect, and injurious to the characters of his brethren. He expressed his desire to be amenable to the regulations of Synod; but could not co-incide with their decision on the other two points. And he solemnly declared, that he never charged or suspected the Synod, *as a body*, of inimical intentions towards him, but only "Dr. Black and his committee."

The "junior minister of great respectability" renewed his motion for Dr. Dickson's expulsion, alleging that his apology was only an aggravation of the original offence. I have since heard that some low "voice" seconded this zealous motion, but for the honour of the body I must say, that I do not believe it received even that *small mark of attention*. After some conversation however, the following resolution was agreed to:

That though this Synod does not approve of Dr. Dickson's apology; it is agreed, under all the circumstances of the case, to dismiss the business.

So much for the Doctors.

The next important affair that occupied our attention, was the case of Clare congregation. We found that the spirit of obstinacy and illiberality was not broken by our exertions during the last year; and that it had been fostered in a most unchristian-like manner by the Seceders, who supplied the disaffected with preaching. A few families still remain attached to Mr. Adams, but a very large majority declared in a memorial, their determination *never* to wait on his ministry. In this most melancholy and distressing case, the Synod resolved, that Mr. Adams has a right to the Regium Donum, and that if the congregation of Clare do not wish to hear him, they may choose and pay an assistant. I dare not hazard an observation on this delicate and unhappy subject. But there is one to which I can turn with pleasure; I mean our declaration in favour of civil and religious liberty.

The first intention on this point was to have conveyed our sentiments in an Address to the Prince Regent. But in reverting to recent occurrences, and ancient precedent, we found very substantial reasons for preferring a PUBLIC DECLARATION, which would of necessity meet

the eye of *public men*. It must be evident to every one, that our principal view in publishing our sentiments at this time, was, to give our feeble aid to the just claims of our Catholic fellow-subjects. I, with a few others, thought that we ought therefore to have expressed our aim in an explicit, candid manner; and an address was drawn up to that effect, which entered fully into the *rights and reasons* of Catholic emancipation. It is but justice to Dr. Black, to state, that the address alluded to met his decided approbation, and that the Synod did not contain a man who expressed himself more warmly, the friend of our *unprivileged* countrymen's claims. But *moderation* was the order of the day, and though we have lost a great deal in *spirit*, we have perhaps gained a great deal in *unanimity*. Even as the declaration stands, there was a small opposition, but so truly *contemptible* was it, that it rather added lustre to the cause. Our primary aim as I before observed, was Catholic Emancipation; our secondary aim was English Dissenting Emancipation. Should our publication contribute in the slightest degree to either, we shall have cause to rejoice that we gave it to the world, though from the hasty manner in which it was drawn up, it is neither so *warmly*, nor so *well* expressed as we could have desired. That every mind may be emancipated from the dominion of error, every soul from the dominion of vice, every son of God from the dominion of debasing servitude, and every nation from the desolating horrors of war, is the heart-felt prayer of

Yours, very truly,

P.S. The declaration alluded to above, was drawn up by a committee of five, and founded on a document written by Dr. Wm. Neilson of Dundalk, who laid it before the Synod. Dr. Dickson, though his sentiments cannot be doubted, *did not introduce* the business, nor open his lips on the subject, (as has been insinuated on misinformation by a very respectable Catholic gentleman,) nor did any of the eight Dissenting members express their fears of any noble Lords!